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ABSTRACT

Those responsible for selection for employment or schooling should use unbiased procedures which predict individual performance, evaluate individuals, and identify the highest ranked individuals. The problem of personnel selection can be viewed as a problem in decision theory in which group membership (race, age, religion) provides a certain amount of prior information, and additional information is supplied by testing and other evaluation procedures. The use of Bayes theorem demonstrates that the posterior or final estimate depends on the characteristics of the group from which the sample is drawn. Self selection frequently causes applicants from different groups to differ in important ways. In particular, different groups have different incentives to accumulate human capital and to offer themselves for training. Group membership is especially important in evaluating characteristics that are not easily testable, such as honesty, or in estimating the probability of infrequently observed events. (Author/KMF)

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THE INCONSISTENCY OF NON-DISCRIMINATION WITH MERIT SELECTION

by

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Houston, TX

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The Relevance of Group Membership

It is almost an article of faith that race, sex, religion, national origin, or similar classifications (which will be referred to here as groups) are irrelevant for hiring or admission to school given a goal of selecting the best candidates. The standard wisdom is that those responsible for selection for employment or schooling should devise an unbiased (in the statistical sense) procedure which predicts individual performance, evaluate individuals with this, and then select the highest ranked individuals. However, analysis shows that even with evaluation procedures that are statistically unbiased, group membership may still be relevant. If the goal is to pick the best individuals for certain jobs or training, membership in the group with the lower average performance (the disadvantaged group) should properly be held against the individual. In general, forbidding the consideration of group membership and seeking to select the best candidates are mutually exclusive goals.

Two definitions will be used. "Non-discrimination" is selection which does not take into account a particular characteristic of the individual being considered (such as his race, sex, age, national origin, etc.). "Merit Selection" is an endeavor to select the best qualified individual. "Ability" will be used to refer to the characteristics

sought by the employers or schools doing the selecting. It includes not only ability narrowly defined but also characteristics such as motivation, honesty, etc.

Several interesting paradoxes will be proven including that a necessary condition for consistency of merit selection with non-discrimination is a general belief that there is no discrimination.

Proof by Bayes Theorem

The relevance of group membership is clearly shown by an application of Bayes Theorem. If f(t) is the probability density function for the distribution of ability in the population of candidates, and the distribution of estimated ability (here referred to as e) given the true ability (symbolized by t) is f(e/t), the distribution of ability given the estimated ability f(t/e) is the product of these two probability density functions divided by the probability density function for the estimated abilities. The proof is by direct substitution into Bayes theorem. (for Bayes theorem see Dyckman, Smidt, and McAdams or most standard statistics texts):

$$f(t/e) = f(t)\ f(e/t)\ /f(e) \qquad \text{Equation 1}$$

Note that f(t) enters into this equation. In general, the probability distribution of abilities among the candidates selected depends on the probability distribution of abilities among the set of candidates being considered. In particular, the mean of the distribution or the final estimate (what is referred to in statistics as the posterior estimate) of the ability of the candidate depends on which group the candidate is a member of, and the distribution of abilities within that group. Group membership matters if there are differences in the distribution of ability among the different groups of candidates being considered for selection.

Surprisingly, the above simple point has been missed in the literature although several models have been developed in which rational behavior results in different standards for different groups (Arrow 1972, Aigner and Cain 1977, Borjas and Goldberg 1978, McCall 1972, Phelps 1972, Smith 1978).

It is important to emphasize that the relevant group characteristics are those of the members of the group who are candidates for selection. Much confusion has been caused by failing to distinguish the issue of whether there are differences between group averages for the population as a whole (or even whether there are genetic differences) from the issue of the distribution of ability among the parts of the population who choose to apply for a particular job or

to a particular school. It is the latter that is relevant for most selection problems.

Not only do employers and schools select among candidates, but candidates select jobs and schools to apply to. In general, there will be a complex interaction between the decision of candidates of different ability to apply, and such external variables as the presence of discrimination (or a belief that it exists), the existence of affirmative action programs, the number of years which an applicant expects to work, and individual desires for different types of work. As will be shown, the result will be different distributions of ability among candidates from different groups.

The Special Case of the Normal Distribution

A particularly interesting case occurs where the errors in evaluation of candidates from a particular group are normally distributed, and the distribution of abilities among the group of candidates is also normal. Under these conditions, the distribution of true abilities given the estimated abilities (test results) will also be normally distributed with the parameters of the normal distribution

easily calculated. (see Dyckman, Smidt, and McAdams (1968, p. 486) or other Bayesian texts).

Let M_p = the mean ability of the group of candidates. (the prior mean)

M_e = the mean of the distribution of the ability of the candidate given the data about him (excluding information about the group he is a member of)

M_t = the expected value for the ability of the candidate given the estimate (the posterior mean)

s_p = the standard deviation of the true ability for the population of candidates (the prior estimate)

s_e = the standard deviation of the estimated ability

s_t = the standard deviation of the ability of the candidate given the estimate

With this notation,

$$M_t = (M_p/s_p^2) + M_e/s_e^2) \; / \; (1/s_p^2 + 1/s_e^2)$$

$$= (M_p s_e^2 + M_e s_p^2) \; / \; s_e^2 + s_p^2) \qquad \text{Equation 2}$$

And

$$1/s_t^2 = 1/s_p^2 + 1/s_e^2 \qquad \text{Equation 3}$$

The above shows the mean and the standard deviation of the distribution of the ability of the candidate given the estimate of his ability made. The expected ability for the candidate is of course the mean for the posterior distribution. Equation 2 gives the mean for the posterior distribution. It is a weighted average of the population mean for all candidates from a particular group (the prior distribution) and the estimated ability for the candidate. The estimated ability for the candidate will be referred to as the test score, with the understanding that the evaluation procedure may not involve a written test but consist of such techniques as an interview, review of previous performance, or a reference check. The reciprocal of the square of the expected standard deviation of the error of the test will be referred to as the precision.

In plain English, once a statistically unbiased estimate of the ability of a candidate has been made, the best estimate for his actual ability will depend on the average ability of the group of candidates he is a member of. Thus, if the goal is to select the best candidates, it will be necessary to take into account the group he is a member of, and the mean ability of that group. The general effect is to move the estimates of ability for each candidate towards the mean ability for the group of which he is a member. If one is primarily trying to select the best candidates (which will usually have evaluations indicating they are above the mean for their group), one should lower the estimates for the candidates that are serious contenders by an amount that depends on the mean ability of the group, the standard deviation of the abilities of the group, and the precision of the estimates.

If the candidate comes from an "inferior" group (remembering that what is relevant is the characteristics of the set of candidates being considered), he should have a higher estimated ability (test score if the estimates are quantitative) than required for a member from a "superior" group. In general, only under special conditions will seeking the best candidates be consistent with applying identical standards irrespective of group membership. For identical standards to be appropriate the distribution of abilities among candidates from the two groups must be identical in

mean and standard deviation, and the statistical distribution of errors in the "test" must have the same mean and standard deviation (ie, it must be possible to estimate abilities equally well for both groups).

In turn for the two populations to be identical will require special circumstances. First, one is typically selecting not from the total population, but from a subset of that population that has chosen to apply. It is highly likely that probability of application depends on ability. In particular, if potential candidates believe that only those of exceptional ability will be accepted, candidates believing they have only average ability will not apply. This self selection may differ between groups. Such differences may arise if members of one group believe that they will be subject to discrimination, and will not be accepted unless they are of higher ability than is required for other groups. It is also possible that there is an affirmative action program which would lead marginal members of one group to apply (when marginal members of other groups do not apply).

The Decision to Invest in Human Capital

Frequently, applying for a job or schooling involves a decision to make an investment in human capital. Here it is

necessary to make a brief digression on the relationship between ability and the return to human capital, before returning to the main argument. In general, the return to investment in human capital will depend on the ability of the individual. (For empirical evidence see Hause (1972) and Griliches and Mason (1972).) Here ability is defined to be whatever is required to succeed at the occupation being discussed. The higher the ability, the higher the return to the investment.

In general, for any particular human capital investment there will be a minimum return required before the investment is worthwhile. Individuals who do not anticipate earning such a return will not make the human capital investment. If the return to human capital increases with ability (as it appears to) there will be a minimum level of ability below which the human capital investment can not be justified. One will not seek admission to certain educational programs nor seek certain entry level jobs. In general, this self set minimum ability level will depend on the return anticipated from the investment being considered. Where a particular occupation promises high returns to virtually everyone in it, individuals don't have to feel they are of particularly high ability to desire to enter it. Where the occupation yields low returns to most individuals and only someone of exceptional ability can earn a good living in it (including both money income and psychic income), only those believing

themselves to have the required exceptional ability will seek to enter it. As a simple example the author has chosen not to seek training as a concert pianist because he believes his level of ability is too low to make possible a reasonable return on the training required.

An interesting case occurs if there is a surplus of candidates who have appropriate training for a well paying occupation. If there is such a surplus, the candidates with the highest ability are likely to be employed. Thus, candidates of low ability, (but the same investment in human capital) do not obtain employment utilizing their training. Instead, they are forced to seek jobs in other sectors where their human capital gives a lower return. This is one reason why the return to human capital and ability is often correlated.

To illustrate the process consider the market for lawyers. Suppose lawyers are very well paid and some institutional device prevents their wages from falling (such as the desire of law firms to hire the best of the young lawyers). The high pay to lawyers will attract attention and lead to a situation where there are more people with law degrees than there are jobs as lawyers (assuming law school capacity is not a constraint). Employers of lawyers will have an abundance of candidates and will tend to hire those lawyers with the highest ability. Those lawyers with sufficient ability

to be hired will reap a handsome return on their investment in a legal training. Those graduates of law school who lose out in the competition for jobs as lawyers will be forced to seek employment in lower paying non-legal jobs. The result is a strong correlation between ability to succeed as a lawyer and the return to a legal training. Observing this, those who do not believe they have the ability required to get jobs as lawyers after law school are less likely to seek legal training.

A similar effect occurs in most other fields. Even within a single field the same effect occurs where there are good and bad jobs. For instance, in law the individuals with the highest ability can aspire to a job with a prestige law firm where their legal training will earn its highest rewards, while those with less abilities must settle for other legal jobs and a lower return to their human capital.

Thus, self selection by individuals will normally occur on the basis of the characteristics sought by employers. This is especially likely where an employer is selecting individuals for entry level positions where they will accumulate human capital (perhaps incurring below normal earnings in the early stages). The employer will normally be seeking those best able to succeed and this will normally induce a self selection process among applicants such that those applying consider themselves to have the required abilities to be hired.

Where universities are doing the selecting there is an additional step. In some cases they may seek the ability required to succeed after training. More often they seek intelligence, but this turns out to be a characteristic which contributes to success in most fields. Candidates will tend to select themselves on the basis of ability as defined by the university, and the minimum ability candidates require of themselves will vary with the group.

Differences in Return to Human Capital Between Groups

It will now be shown that a belief that the return to human capital investment depends on such variables as age, race, sex, national origin, religion, and presence of a handicap on the part of members of the relevant group insures that seeking the best candidates and non-discrimination are mutually exclusive. That such a belief would be rational is implied by much research on the returns to education (Hause (1972), Griliches and Mason (1972).

Suppose there is discrimination (rational or irrational) against members of certain groups. This will raise the ability a member of the group must believe that he has before seeking training for that occupation. Thus, if there is discrimination in such uses (or even if there is believed

to be such discimination) the distribution of abilities among the applicants from different groups will differ. In such cases, if two candidates from different groups but with the same test scores apply, the member of the group believing itself to be discriminated against should be chosen if the goal is to select the best candidates. A paradoxical conclusion is that for rules against discrimination to be consistent with seeking the best candidates, it is necessary that there be no discrimination (and that no one believe that they would be the victim of discimination if there was no rule)!

Even in the absence of discrimination the return to human capital investment may differ between groups. Members of different groups may anticipate spending different periods of time in the job market after education and this will cause differences in the return to occupational training, and differences in the ability level at which individuals choose to seek training.

A particularly obvious application is to the different age groups. The number of years till retirement or death declines with age. The old can expect fewer working years to recover their investment in training than the young. Among the old, only those of exceptional ability will seek further education or start new careers. Thus, the average ability of old economically motivated individuals should be above that of young economically motivated individuals. If,

as appears likely, the abilities educational institutions select for are those required to succeed in the career they offer training for (or are correlated with these abilities)[1] schools seeking to select the candidates most qualified to succeed will almost always require lower standards for the old than for the young.[2]

Consider women, many of whom do not plan to work while raising children. Since they anticipate a shorter period to use their occupational training, they will require a higher level of ability before undertaking the expense of acquiring an education or a skill. The minimum ability of women choosing to apply will be higher than the minimum ability of the men choosing to apply. Given such a different distribution of abilities among the applicants, schools seeking the best candidates should have different admission standards for women than for men. In this case, if a woman and a man apply with the same estimated ability (ie test score) the woman should be taken since the population of women applicants will have the higher ability. Should a school be observed to apply the same standards, there is a strong presumption that they are not seeking the best candidates they can get regardless of sex.

Of course, if members of different groups make different use of their education there is a question whether the proper goal is to select the best candidates. For instance,

if women are less likely to use their expensive (and subsidized training) maybe men should be preferred over women of equal ability. Likewise, if those of foreign origin or nationality are less likely to use their training in the country subsidizing it, that country may wish to consider national origin in deciding whose training to subsidize.

A critical question is whether the return to training depends on ability as it is defined by those doing the selecting. If there is no relationship, different returns for different groups will cause differences in the percentage of groups who apply and cause some groups to be under or overrepresented (possibly resulting in complaints about discrimination). It will not cause the distribution of abilities among those who apply to differ. However, if the return to investment in human capital does depend on ability, f(t) (i.e. the distribution of abilities among the set of applicants) will depend on group membership.

Depletion Effects

Frequently, the pool of well qualified candidates who might choose to apply for a particular job or school will be depleted by the better candidates having chosen to apply

elsewhere or by candidates having been preferentially selected elsewhere.

If there is an affirmative action program it may cause more of the well qualified members of a group to apply for a job or education than another group. If the standards applied to the groups are the same, the group benefiting from the affirmative action program will be depleted of its best qualified members. This will create a difference in the mean abilities of the remainders of the groups. If the best candidates are to be hired, the standards applied to the group benefitting from affirmative action will have to be higher than applied to other groups. In other words, if there is an affirmative action program benefitting blacks, it will be proof of violation of the merit principle to apply identical standards to whites and blacks.

Suppose that the best qualified women enter the job market while the best qualified men enter graduate school. (Possibly because of differences in future life plans or simpley due to differences in tastes). The result would be that different standards would be required for women than for men.

Proportionately more men than women chose engineering as their first choice for graudate schools, while women prefer education. Suppose that most applicants to education

schools are accepted while only the best applicants to engineering schools are accepted. The remainder choose to study business. The pool of men applying to business school will contain those who were rejected by the engineering schools. The set of male applicants to business schools will include a lower proportion of well qualified candidates than the set of female applicants. If it is desired to select the best candidates, the standards for men must be higher than for women.

Role of Precision in Estimates

Equation 2 shows that the weight given to the group mean in predicting a candidate's performance depends on the reciporical of the square of the standard deviation (a quality referred to as the precision) of the initial estimates about the true value. In the typical case where one is trying to select candidates whose performance is superior to the mean of their group, and only a minority of candidates will be selected candidates from groups for which precise estimates can be made should have an advantage. In plain English, preference should be shown to candidates whose future performance can most easily be predicted.

This result should not prove surprising. To take the extreme example, when one has knowledge about some candidates and no knowledge about other candidates, the best that can be done is to assume that the candidates about which there is no knowledge will have the average ability of the group they are members of (or the average for the whole population if nothing is known about the group they belong to). In general, the best of a group will better than the mean of that group. Thus, one would expect to do better by taking the best of the candidates about which there is knowledge than by picking randomly from the group about which there is no knowledge (other than a group mean). If there are two groups of candidates, one consisting of five candidates one has had personal experience with, and a hundred for which there are only resumes, picking the highest ranked from those one has personal knowledge of has a better chance of succeeding than picking the best of the hundred. Certainly, the prevalence of hiring from within and selecting from ones professional acquaintances suggests that this strategy is common.

Experience in similar jobs will usually improve the quality of information about an individual and such previous experience will usually be greatest for older candidates, increasing the precision of the evaluation. This should give some advantage to the well qualified aged (those who

are not well qualified will just have their deficiences made more apparent).

Tests of ability for different groups may differ in precision. It is widely believed that many written tests are culturally biased (and certainly many informal procedures are). Frequently most candidates come from a particular group. The test that will be most useful for selection will be designed for that group. It is plausable (and proper) that these tests will be less precise for other groups. (For actual evidence on the precision of tests see Hunter.)

In selecting by informal means such as interviews, reference checks, previous experience with the candidate, etc. it is likely that some groups will be more readily evaluated than others. Those from locations (such as foreign countries) or cultures unknown to the selector will probably be less precisely evaluated and will hence suffer in a taional selection process. In particular, information from someone who personally knows the candidate or his work often is necessary for the most precise evaluations. Such information can usually only be obtained if the selector personally knows someone who knows the candidate or his work. Thus, the precision of evaluations will usually be greatest for the candidates whose social or professional worlds touch those of the selector. The result is that those selected will usually be similar to those doing the selecting with

regard to many variables such as social class, location, religion, etc. Such an outcome is often a necessary result of a good faith effort to select the best candidates, and hence can not be presumed to indicate either prejudice, or discrimination.

While this is not the place to construct a full model of the labor market under uncertainty, the above argument implies that members of groups (i.e. minority groups plus women) other than the group doing most of the selection will be at a disadvantage in competing for a majority of jobs.

However, if some selecting is done by members of the minority group, it may happen that superior members of that group find themselves at an advantage in competing for such positions. A simple example is that members of ethnic communities have an advantage within that community. This advantage holds only if they are above average. If the candidate is below the group mean, greater precision in estimating his true ability merely proves his inferiority, and makes it harder for him to find employment within the group.

The greater precision in evaluation inside a community can lead to inferior community members failing to find work (or marriage partners) within the group and being forced to look outside the group. The result will be that those

outside the community will have relatively poor experience with members of that group. This can lead to the appearance of what is sometimes referred to "prejudice". Members of other groups adjust their prior (in the statistical sense) estimates to take into account their experience with members of that group, and only a truly superior individual from such a group can obtain employment outside of the group. This mechanism can maintain an economy with several communities, each hiring from within. (Whether this actually happens is a topic for further research).

Of course, improving the precision of evaluations of members of particular group is a valuable service, and employers are willing to pay for better information. If there were groups with many potentially good employees available at less than the going wage rate, firms and individuals are likely to develop methods for improving the estimates. Interpreters will be hired to interview foreigners; specialized tests will be developed for certain groups (if permitted by law). Finally, firms that have special abilities in tapping such pools of labor will be at an advantage and could be expected to grow at the expense of other firms. For instance, many ethnic communities have developed employers that are quite able to evaluate members of the community. The final results may be segregated communities with equal wages.

When Group Membership is Important

So far this paper has merely shown that group membership will in general be relevant. There remains the question of how important it is likely to be. This is a big question which can only be touched on here (and is certainly an important topic for research).

Theory shows (see Equation 2) that the importance of prior information depends on the relative precisions (defined as the reciprocal of the square of the standard deviation) of the prior and test information. For the case of normal distributions for both the prior and the test error (sample distribution in statistical theory) the expected value for the mean of the posterior distribution will be a weighted average of the means of the prior distribution (i.e. the group mean) and the mean for the test, with the weights being the relative precisions. In other words, the more accurately future performance can be predicted from the test (which may be an informal evaluation) the less important are the characteristics of the group. In the cases where it is possible to predict individual performance well from the test data, group membership will be of only minor importance (although it will be of no importance only where there is no uncertainty about future performance).

Where candidates have the ability to impose very high costs by single actions, estimating the probability of such infrequent actions from past experience will be impossible and group membership may be the only source of useful information. For instance, a frequent problem in hiring is to screen out dishonest employees. No good ways of discovering dishonest employees in advance have been found outside of avoiding candidates with a past history of dishonesty (ie membership in the group without a record of past dishonesty) and membership in various other groups (admittedly not a very good method).

It is likely that dishonesty is more likely to occur when there are low losses from being caught and high gains from success than where the opposite is true. In particular, it is plausable that honesty will be more likely in candidates that believe that dishonesty is punished after death (i.e. certain religious beliefs) than in candidates whose religious views present no obstacle to dishonesty. Forbidding consideration of religion can make avoiding dishonesty much harder. Similar effects could occur with other forms of group membership relevant to measures such as strength of community ties, or ability to leave the country to avoid prosecution (i.e. nationality or national origin).

It is hard to measure precisely the probability of making a very bad mistake or causing an accident. Observation

of previous performance may not be of much use because the events that one is interested in occur too infrequently for its probability to be estimated from a few years of observation. Membership in various groups may be the best information available. This is likely in evaluating probabilities such as that of giving secrets to a foreign power, committing another serious crime, causing a serious accident, or defaulting on a loan.

A particularly important case occurs in selecting faculty members or scientists to do highly original research. It is not known how to predict the probability of a Nobel prize winning insight. Clearly the event of interest is too infrequent to predict by observing its previous occurrence in the same individual. (If this were the requirement no junior faculty would ever be hired.) The best rule is to utilize prior information about the groups from whence such discoveries have previously come, such as graduation from a prestige graudate school, possession of a graduate degree, possession of a high school diploma, etc. It should be noted that one characteristic known to be associated with a low probability of making major discoveries in some theoretical fields, being past middle age, is one that it is forbidden to consider in hiring. It is possible that other characteristics on the forbidden list may be useful predictors (especially those related to culture such as religion or national origin).

Conclusions

Only under highly unusual conditions should a firm seeking to select the best candidates hve the same requirements for members of different groups. The conditions include identical average abilities and distribution of abilities, identical precision of the evaluation procedure (test) in predicting future performance, no tendency for the better qualified members of one group to apply for either the job being offered or for jobs that might compete for the same candidates. The last condition normally requires that the tastes of the different groups be identical regarding the desirability of different jobs or schools, that selection for schooling and employment not be based on group membership (if it is there will be depletion effects regardless of whether the use of group membership is rational); that virtually all members of affected groups believe that there is no discrimination; and that returns to investment in human capital be the same for members of all groups.

There are several interesting conclusions. For the absence of discrimination on age to be consistent with merit selection it is necessary that death rates be independent of age and for the number of years to retirement to be the same at all ages. If the goal is to hire the best qualified applicants, sex will be a relevant measure if one sex tends

to take a disproportionate amount of time from work to bear and raise children, lowering the return to investment in human capital (as women seem to do in all cultures).

For laws against forbidding the consideration of group membership to be consistent with seeking the best qualified applicants, it is necessary that there be a universal belief that discrimination does not occur. (Otherwise self selection by candidates is likely to make the consideration of group membership necessary). Of course, if there is agreed to be no discrimination, it is hard to imagine why we should make the effort to forbid it. It would appear that an interest group cannot logically argue both that there is a problem with discrimination, and that outlawing consideration of group membership is consistent with seeking the best qualified candidates.

Of course, rules against consideration of group membership may be justified on other grounds than that group membership is irrelevant. It may be argued that use of selection procedures involving group membership involve externalities (such as promoting social strife) that justify forbidding their use. It may be believed that a certain group should be given a greater share of the available jobs or school places and that forbidding consideration of group membership facilitates this goal. Finally, it may also be argued that decision makers do not know how to make optimal

use of group membership data, and that better decisions result from forbidding use of such data than from permitting such use.

Of course, if support for rules forbidding consideration of group membership is based on the above considerations, proponents should make these arguments and not use the logically incorrect argument that ignoring group membership is necessary for seeking the best qualified candidates. (It is not even consistent with that goal.)

One of the implications of this paper is that the common statements taking the form of "Hiring shall be based on ability irrespective of race (or sex, national origin, religion, handicapped status, marital status, sexual preference, etc.)" are at best ambiguous, and at worst illogical. Logically proper statements are "The best qualified candidates shall be selected without preference for any group (but taking into account group membership to the extent it is relevant)." and "No consideration of group membership shall be permitted (even when it is necessary to select the best candidate)". In practice, antidiscrimination rules appear to have been sold to the public on the basis of the first statement, but administered on the basis of the second statement. Indeed, no only has consideration of group membership been excluded even when relevant, but there appears to be a tendency to exclude any characteristics that

might be a surrogate for group membership, or even correlated with it. Rational discussion would be greatly facilitated if participants would state which policy they are actually advocating.

While the phrase "equality of opportunity" lacks a well accepted definition, it appears to refer to the absence of any consideration (rational or irrational) being given to the group of which the candidate is a member. Since virtually all decisions are made on the basis of some group characteristic (such as membership in the group of those who have passed a typing test) "equality of opportunity" can have meaning only if used in a context which makes clear which characteristic is to be ignored. If this definition is accepted, it follows that equality of opportunity and merit selection are mutually exclusive goals.

In general, those affected by a hiring decision are those hired and the employer. If the ethical decision is made that there is no reason for prefer the welfare of one individual over that of another because of his race or other group membership (which seems to be a widely shared belief) it appears that the only basis for hiring will be the benefits to the employer and the general public. This normally requires seeking the best qualified candidates. Since seeking the best qualified candidates is in general inconsistent with equality of opportunity, it follows that the

absence of group preference is inconsistent with equality of opportunity. There are some hard choices to be made.

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